May 3, 1955

Screw-worm Survey of Palm Beach, Hendry, Broward, Collier, Dade, and Monroe Counties, Florida

C. C. Skipper

In compliance with suggestions in Dr. Bushland's letter of March 14, 1955, I went into Palm Beach County, which comprises by far the larger portion of the lower east coast of Florida where livestock are featured and proceeded with the screw-worm survey.

Working along temp. U.S. 98 from Canal Point to 20 Mile Bend and along U.S. 441 from 20 Mile Bend to Belle Glade, then doubling back and working along U.S. 441 into Miami, then along U.S. 1 south to Florida City, southwest along Fla. 27 to Flamingo (or Cape Sable), north along Fla. 27 from Homestead, east on U.S. 41 to U.S.27, then northwest through the Glades along U.S. 27, and on the same road to Clewiston in Hendry County.

On this round I contacted 25 cattlemen owning from less than 1,000 to as many as 5,000 or 6,000 head of cattle. As the map will show, I worked in Palm Beach, Broward, Dade, and Monroe Counties.

I found no livestock south of Miami or U.S. 41 across the Everglades. Only wildlife in this area and contacts with park rangers and wildlife officers both in the Everlades National Park and along U.S. 41 failed to reveal any screw-worm infestations in wildlife for several years past.

Cattlemen on both sides of the Palm Beach-Broward County line, along U.S. 441, reported several infestations lately; in fact, that was the "hot-spot" of that entire area but not alarming there. Practically no cases were reported along U.S. 27, which runs through the muck all the way through these counties.

Moving into the Hendry-Collier County area, I was at a loss as how best to try to cover this area, since I particularly wanted to acquaint myself as much as possible with the physical characteristics of the area because of the possible large-scale test to be conducted there, and since this is such a terrible area to get around in because of the swamps, marshes, sloughs, and strands (the only way possible to cover this is by Jeep or marsh buggy and lots of places, especially out in Everglades, only by marsh buggy) until it occurred to me that this was not only one of the most heavily cattle populated areas but also one of the best hunting areas in the State. Then it was that I turned to the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission for the Everglades District. Mr. B.B. Cantrell of Okeechobee is not only Game and Fish Commissioner for this district, but has large cattle holdings in the area. He had heard

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Working along temp. U.S. 98 from Canal Point to 80 Mile Bend and along U.S. 441 from 80 Mile Bend to Belle Glade, then doubling back and working along U.S. 441 into Miami, then along U.S. 1 south to Florida City, southwest along Fla. 27 to Plantage (or Cape Sable), north along Fla. 27 from Homestead, east on U.S. 41 to U.S.27, then northwest through the Glades along U.S. 27, and on the same road to Clewiston in Hendry County.

On this round I contacted 28 cattlemen owning from less than 1,000 to as many as 8,000 or 9,000 head of cattle. As the map will show, I worked in Palm Beach, Broward, Dade, and Monroe Counties.

I found no livestock south of Miami or U.S. 41 across the Everglades. Only wildlife in this area and contacts with park rangers and wildlife officers both in the Everglades National Park and along U.S. 41 failed to reveal any screw-worm infestations in wildlife for several years past.

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of the proposed project through Mr. Talmadge Hart, who is also on the Game and Fish Commission as well as on the Governor's Livestock Advisory Committee. Mr.Cantrell very graciously agreed to cooperate in any way possible.

I suggested that,since he had men and equipment in the area and was patrolling it continuously, I ride with the different men on their patrols and thereby acquaint myself with the area. This was agreed on, nad he referred me to Mr. Earnest M. Williams, Area Supervisor for Hendry and Collier Counties, Clewiston, Fla. Mr.Williams took me to Immokolee to the area radio headquarters and introduced me to Mrs. Chapman, the announcer, and instructed her to advise the different wardens to cooperate with me. This was on Monday, March 28.

For the next two weeks I was in company of E.B. Douglas, Immokallee; Floyd Webb, Copeland; Bill carver, Bonita Springs; or L. P.Austin, LaBelle. These men were most cooperative in every way possible and did a wonderful job of showing me over the area.

On Tuesday afternoon, April 6, I was taken in hand by Mr. L. P. Austin. Mr.Austin is famous in this area for his knowledge of the Big Cypress Swamp and that part of the Everglades south of Clewiston and adjacent to the Miami Canal. It was he who took me into the southeast corner of Hendry and south into the northeast corner of Collier and for a 2-day tour of Everglades, about 35 miles southeast of Clewiston along the Miami Canal and from there west to the Big Cypress Indian Reservation. This jaunt was by marsh buggy entirely. We camped Thursday night, the 7th. I was especially interested in making this trip, since there are what are known as "the rock dumps" along the Miami Canal. These rock dumps are merely the bank of the canal where the rock and muck were once piled up and the muck has washed down and spread out while the rocks have remained high and dry. There are about 6 miles of this bank that are never submerged and are covered by rubber trees and various other tropical growths. There are also mounds out in the Glades, west of these dumps, that are never under water. I visited two of these. They are of a muck-marl combination soil. They are 2 to 3 feet above the level of the glades here, I am told, are never under water, and are covered by various tropical growths.

The first one that we saw was approximately 1/2 acre in area, had a large maple tree and a large sour orange tree on it, as well as other growths. The other was probably an acre in area and was quite well covered by rubber trees that had been uprooted by a hurricane years ago and had put up other large tops. The only water standing out in the Glades at this time is in alligator wallows. Usually there will be such a wallow adjacent to these mounds. In this area we saw many deer, hog, wildcat, raccoon, and bear tracks. While we did not see a track that we could identify as such, there are also panthers in here.

Mr. Austin, with whom I made the trip, has hunted in this area in this area for the last 20 years and is probably as familiar with the area as any man living and he tells me that he has never known of an infestation of screw-worms out in the wild glades. He has seen all kinds of wildlife as well as many hogs and cattle die from screw-worms out of the glades in the swamps and pine, prairie, palmetto, and cypress lands.

All livestock owners contacted were most hopeful that screw-worms might some day be eradicated.

The two most outstanding "hot spots" in this area now are in South Hendry County in the "Point of the Cypress" area in Mr. McDaniels' pasture and in the west side of Collier County, southeast of Bonito Springs in Bill Pifer's mule pen pasture. Mr. Pifer reported 28 of 30 calves infested. Screw-worms are about as numerous as they are in the Peace River Swamp area in Hardee County. So far these are the hottest places that I have found in the State.

In case we start a project here and use goats again, there are just certain places in the area where they could be placed on dry soil in the rainy season. The land is so flat that when it is wet, it's all wet, and when it's dry, it's all dry. I have places in mind where we could pen them fairly well. Of course those things would have to be worked out later, but as I have gone along I have been mindful of them.

The time has been so short that I could only hit the high spots. I have a plan in mind where we might be able to secure laboratory space and maybe some living quarters for some of the men. The people down here are for anything that might bring relief from screw-worms.

You will find maps under separate cover showing the routes of my travels. I have made about 700 miles overland. As a further cooperation of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, they kindly consented to fly me over the area today (4/12/55). I met the plane in Okeechobee. We were airborne 4 hours and 30 minutes. I had him fly me over the rock dumps and mounds mentioned previously in this report to ascertain whether they are recognizable from the air. They are.

The pilot, Lewis L. Conrad, Jr., Box 551, Okeechobee, Fla., tells me that he saw a buck deer on the north end of the rock dumps with what he believed to be screw-worms in the back of the head and neck. I heard of several cases where the bucks when rubbing the velvet off their horns evidently made abrasions on the back of the head and had gotten screw-worm infestations. These had all been back in the swamp and prairie country, but evidently one in the glades contracted them. He stated he flew low over the animal several times and that the deer was so ill that he failed to notice the plane and he could tell that there was a large dark area at the base of the skull and back on the neck. Another warden reported finding the carcass of a buck near this spot shortly after this one had been seen.

Summary: South Palm Beach and north Broward Counties along U.S. 441 show a medium number of screw-worm infestations.

Southeast Hendry and northwest Collier Counties show heavy screw-worm infestations. Of course there are a few screw-worm infestations over this entire area but I consider them to be light everywhere except those places mentioned.

The Game and Fresh Water Commission of Florida is eager to cooperate in any possible way in the fight on screw-worms.

Only certain places are accessible by conventional autos.

The livestock owners are anticipating helping any way they can.

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